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ABSTRACT

More than an interdisciplinary format employing lecturers from different disciplines, team teaching is an approach which involves true team work between two qualified instructors who, together, make presentations to an audience. The instructional advantages of team teaching include: (1) the elimination of lecture-style instruction in favor of a dynamic interplay of two minds and personalities; (2) the presentation of faculty as models for discussion and disagreement; (3) team teaching's effective use of human resources; (4) its potential for revitalizing instructional capabilities through a process of dialogue; (5) its capability of stimulating interest in traditional courses as students share the exuberance and intellectual discourse that the professors communicate; (6) its effective use of facilities; (7) the potential that team teaching presents for interaction with the audience; and (8) its favorable competition with the media. Implementing a team teaching approach requires administrative encouragement, acceptance of an initial experimental quality, and willingness to take risks. Proof that team teaching works comes not only from the instructors' self-judgment, but from students' evaluations. (HB)

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TEAM TEACHING: AN ALTERNATIVE TO LECTURE FATIGUE

Team teaching is a concept whose time has come. In our thinking, team teaching is not a professor and teaching assistant relationship nor is it an interdisciplinary format wherein individual lecturers from different disciplines alternate in the same course. It is simply true team work between two qualified instructors who, together, make presentations to an audience.

Instructional Advantages

Elimination of Lecture-Style Instruction. Lecture, the speaking aloud from prepared notes to an audience, is rapidly losing support in favor of alternate forms of instruction. Even instructors, conditioned to lecturer's recitations, do not find themselves enthusiastic about listening at length to such monologues and should not expect students to be. Lectures require students to act as passive receptors of communicated information, but team teaching involves the student in the physical and mental stimulation created by viewing two individuals at work and creates an at-home atmosphere in which the student engages in a form of channel-changing. The dynamic interplay of two minds and personalities weaving through a subject, presenting the development of an idea instead of a finished set of facts can excite and involve any student.

Faculty as Models for Discussion and Disagreement. Presenting themselves as models of discussion and disagreement, the faculty team communicates a mode of civilized behavior, no matter how serious the disagreements may be, as well as exposing students to material content. Uneducated by prior schooling in processes of conflict resolution and cooperative intellectual endeavors, it is fanciful to believe that the underdeveloped student can, or will, respond in a civilized manner to provocative statements or situations upon leaving school. It has been observed of graduating students that while they may be educated--they are not necessarily civilized!

Use of Available Human Resources. Neither additional costs for the acquisition of expensive materials or services nor the time delay required to initiate a new system are necessary to institute a team teaching program. Faculty is readily available within the teaching institution, and faculty requires only minimal reorganization to put a team into operation.

Revitalization of Instructional Capabilities. In attempting to improve the process of education, all too often educators look outside for the latest in "gadgetry" or other fads. From each of these outreaches, the educational establishment has eventually recoiled, unsatisfied. Inevitably, educational reformers return to the basic relationships of faculty and students, reinstating outmoded presentations of pure "listen and gain wisdom" lectures. These fluctuating attempts are all designed to amplify and deepen communications between students and instructors. Team teaching begins with the recognition that the instructor/student link is critical and offers an approach that has been shown to stimulate and provoke, while expanding and enriching student understanding.

Since the Greeks, dialogue has been acknowledged as one of the finest methods of learning. While teaching, the instructors are drawing from each other and from themselves both factual and conceptual knowledge that might otherwise lie dormant. Lecturing in isolation, individual instructors lack both the insightful criticism and exposure to alternate styles necessary to expand, rethink, and reform presentations, thus denying to themselves the accessibility of ongoing renewal.

Stimulation of Interest in Traditional Courses. Required liberal education courses (e.g., history, philosophy, literature, government) have a reputation among students for their stiltified presentations. In other words, they are considered boring. The instructor responds with disbelief that their subject, which they know to be fascinating, is inaccurately considered boring and irrelevant.

Team teaching is not boring. It is exciting to watch in person or on television. Students are drawn into the situational dynamic from the first moment. In spite of themselves, in spite of all they have heard to the contrary about the subject, students begin to share the exuberance and intellectual discourse the professors communicate.

Effective Use of Facilities. Institutions, especially older universities, contain large lecture halls which are often unused because they are unsuitable to advanced courses, are cold and impersonal. Team teaching can revitalize large lecture hall usage. The team in action is larger than the sum of its parts, and the presentation thus becomes magnified to fill the hall. At-home students find that educational programming offers the unheard of in education, entertainment.

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Effective Interaction With Audience. With the advent of mass media, especially film and television, students have become accustomed to seeing top professional performers and to judging presentations in form, if not content, by the artistic standards of performing specialists. Professorial lectures suffer by comparison. It is no use protesting that no such comparison should be made between entertainment and education. Comparisons are made, consciously or unconsciously, particularly by the neophyte student.

Favorable Competition With Media. The team approach, because it is aimed directly toward enhanced performance, answers directly to the competition of the media and appeals to a broad spectrum of viewers. To objections that professors are not performers and therefore cannot compete with media presentations, they can. We have done it.

Implementation

How is a team put together? Team teaching cannot be accomplished by administrative fiat, but administration must encourage this innovation. Performing talent, far from being a scarce commodity among higher education faculties, lies dormant and unrecognized often by students, colleagues, and even by potential team members themselves.

The quest for teams may be initiated in many ways. Friendship is often the basis for professional relationships, with the confidence that comes from respecting and understanding another person translated into a comfortable interchange before an audience, in class or on television. Compatibility is not measurable by individuals' teaching reputations or styles. In fact, the unsung individual may blossom in the new setting and challenge of team taught courses.

However, when team teaching is first attempted, there may be an experimental quality to the course. A school's administration, with the responsibility for maintaining academic integrity, will be taking a risk by instituting team teaching, as they would when instituting any new approach. But with team teaching, the risk is lessened through arrangement for a possible split of the team-taught course into two separate courses--should the team fail. Simply, administration should assign the team to two separate sections taught in the same place, at the same time. When video team courses are arranged, it is best advised that the potential team work together "on camera" in practice sessions under the direction of a media individual--experienced and capable of objectively assessing the potential team.

How does the team actually work in practice? While students are most aware of the stimulation and repartee, underlying the interplay is a well-developed common structure. Both instructors must agree upon perimeters of the course. Within those limits the instructors are free to exhibit the compatibility and responsiveness created within the performing atmosphere.

Visual placement is as important as in staging a play. In the classroom, experience has shown that placing a lectern at each end of the stage is distracting to students, for they find themselves in a situation not unlike that of watching a tennis match. Somewhat less clumsy is moving both lecturers to stage center behind a single lectern. We have found, however, that in a classroom setting one instructor is designated as the lead, for the day, and as such will occupy center stage, while the other may well remain at stage left, or right. The instructor at the center gives the students a focal point; and the distance of the second instructor from the lead instructor allows for space to accentuate expressions of conflict, agreement, additions, or amplifications.

Evaluation

Proof that the team teaching format has worked comes not only from the instructors' self-judgment, but from students' written evaluations. What do they say? They say they like it! So successful was the approach that news of the course technique circulated. Student demand for more team taught courses exceeded available courses. Faculty and administrators, many of whom came to the class with ingrained skepticism, came away as converts to the new approach to teaching.

In addition, the unexpected benefits of renewal and revitalization of the professorial participants carried over into single presentation classes, accelerating the quality of individual presentations and the use of new or different approaches learned from the opposite half of the team.

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